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ABSTRACT

In an experimental study, subjects (practicing and preservice teachers) had to take the role of either a pupil or a teacher in viewing a new student. They inspected for thirty seconds a list of sixteen adjectives used to describe students, half belonging to a teacher's implicit personality theory of pupils, and half belonging to a (hypothetical) student implicit personality theory of pupils. (The implicit personality theory identifies the causal factors a person attributes to another's behavior.) It was seen that adjectives belonging to teachers' dimensions were more often recalled when subjects received instruction to assume the teacher role toward a new student. Adjectives belonging to the student personality theory were more often recalled under instructions for subjects to assume a student role toward a new student. Results are interpreted according to theoretical bases developed in the paper. It is concluded that teachers and schoolmates do selectively attend to a student's attributes that are relevant to their role. However, they are also able to make statements about other attributes to the degree to which the specimen student is of importance to them. (MJB)

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IMPLICIT PERSONALITY THEORY OF TEACHERS, CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS

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This empirical investigation is devoted to the question whether teachers and students differ in perceiving attributes of students. While in the position of a teacher one is pursuing different goals with students than while in the position of a schoolmate. For them other attributes and conducts are relevant. The same conducts are perhaps interpreted differently. Approaching a novice the teacher is activating another perceptual set than a schoolmate. With it he resorts to his implicit personality theory. For the teacher the relevance of the dimensions of his implicit personality theory results from the fact that in his opinion it is containing the causes which determine the performance at school. For him achieving a high level of school performance is an important goal. This experiment is to analyse the question whether teachers and schoolmates attend selectively to those attributes which are part of their implicit personality theory.

A vivid illustration of different perspectives in perception dates back on Lewin. The 'war landscape' is demonstrating the directionality of perception and the organization of the recognized objects under a determining influence. It is referring to the different apprehension of identical facts resulting from different perspectives: 'If you approach the front-

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line coming from the base you are experiencing a strange transformation of the scenery' (1917, p. 441). While the ordinary landscape is experienced as wide and spherical without 'before' and 'behind' the area at the front-line seems to end there where the combat-line is supposed to be. As the front-rank in the trenches the objects, meadows, woods, and buildings turn to war requisites. The field turns to the zone of fire, the buildings to sheltering objects. Perception is centered in a specific way. The situation of a tourist is different from that of a soldier who is perceiving nature under the aspect of its function in combat.

The notion of perspectives offers a strinking designation for the fact that interpersonal perception is related to location, outlook, or visual point (Graumann, 1960). The manner in which persons form impressions of their fellowmen is dependent on the set they hold against other persons (Crockett, Mahood & Press, 1975; Press, Crockett & Delia, 1975). Zajonc (1960) talks of 'cognitive tuning', implying the focussing on a certain type of information processing in interpersonal matters. They co-determine the description we deliver after absorbing informations about other persons (O'Neal & Mills, 1969).

In 1904 Külpe was able to determine the influence of a set on perception. His experimental subjects had to direct their attention to certain attributes of objects, e.g. their colour. The attributes attended to were always reproduced correctly. The non-attended attributes frequently were reproduced incorrectly. Paivio & Steeves (1963) demonstrated in an investiga-

tion, that attitudinal differences among individuals have an impact on perception. They recorded simultaneously two texts and presented them to their experimental subjects. The content of these two messages was related to two distinct appraisals. The experimental subjects were tested with the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey scale 'Study of Values' with regard to their scores in Spranger's values. After listening to the tape the Ss reproduced more items related to their dominant attitudes than items related to attributes they didn't share.

Thibaut & Jones (1958) suggest a taxonomy to determine the influence of role characteristics on interpersonal perception. By means of it those aspects under which a person perhaps is perceived or evaluated are derived from the goals an individual is pursuing during an interaction. In accordance with that we can assume that the categories of judgment under which teachers respectively schoolmates perceive a student depend on the goals the teachers (respectively schoolmates) are pursuing during an interaction.

Now we will turn to the underlying hypothesis of this paper which says that the constructs 'implicit personality theory' and 'causal attribution' determine the interpersonal perspective. They mediate between the goals of an interaction and perception.

In a study (Hofer 1969, 197o) the implicit personality theory of teachers about students was ascertained. 4o teachers were submitted 25 selected attributes. They were asked to indicate on a nine-point scale the similarities of two attributes in

students. A multidimensional-scaling analysis yielded a five-dimensional structure. It is depicted in table 1. The factors were designated as follows:

- working conduct characterized by the following attributes: negligent, unconcentrated, alert, sense of duty
- sensibility: shy, sensitive, self-confident
- talent: untalented, intelligent
- dominance: egotism, ambitious
- restraint: reserved, polite

These five factors of implicit personality theory might be labeled as the set of categories of judgment which teachers impose on students. If teachers are to evaluate real students the factor analysis of these evaluations results in nearly identical dimensions as the multidimensional-scaling analysis of the similarity estimations (Hofer, 197o). The hypothesis leading to the present study said that a teacher is activating an implicit personality theory about students providing the categories for evaluations and directs his attention to the respective attributes. Other attributes are payed less attention while being in the teacher's role.

The set activated by the implicit personality theory within a social context is of relevance for the present goals an individual is pursuing. Where from does this relevance arise? In an investigation (Hofer, 1975) 891 students were evaluated by their teachers on 25 contrasting attributes (the attributes were taken from those in table 1). Similarly as above a factor analysis of the judgments yielded the five factors of ability effort, discipline, social activity, and fortitude. Scores on

Table 1. Attribute structure of the average teacher (Varimax)
(loadings over o.25 are underlined. Column 6 contains the computed communalities, column 7 the Eigen-values)

attributes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 alert	.o4	-.17	-.27	.o5	-.14	.13	1.44
2 attentive	-.33	-.o6	-.o8	-.o2	-.oo	.12	1.13
3 harmonious	-.15	-.25	.o6	-.34	-.1o	.21	.72
4 ambitious	-.26	-.o2	-.o7	.34	.o5	.19	.61
5 imaginative	.o8	-.13	-.33	-.o3	.o6	.14	.43
6 studious	-.25	.o2	.o4	.o1	.o4	.o7	.33
7 obedient	-.18	.o8	.15	-.o8	-.11	.o8	.27
8 dominant	-.o4	-.34	-.14	.o8	.o3	.14	.26
9 recognition seeking	.o7	-.13	.o4	.44	-.o3	.22	.24
1o sociable	.1o	-.29	-.o5	-.o4	-.25	.16	.22
11 polite	-.o6	.o8	.o6	-.o7	-.31	.12	.19
12 intelligent	-.o1	-.oo	-.39	-.o5	.o4	.15	.18
13 complex	.13	.32	-.o5	.15	.15	.17	.17
14 dutiful	-.33	.o7	.o1	.o2	-.o7	.12	.16
15 shy	-.o8	.45	.o8	-.18	.oo	.25	.14
16 self-confident	-.o5	-.36	-.o8	-.o1	.o5	.14	.12
17 sensitive	-.o1	.37	-.o2	.o5	-.o2	.14	.11
18 likeable	-.o5	-.o1	-.1o	-.26	-.25	.14	.1o
19 untalented	.12	-.o3	.52	.o1	.o9	.29	.o8
2o uninterested	.32	-.o3	.35	-.o6	.27	.3o	.o7
21 unconcentrated	.45	.19	.o7	.o5	-.o5	.25	.o6
22 restless	.36	.oo	.o3	.27	.1o	.21	.o3
23 reserved	-.o3	.28	.1o	-.2o	.39	.28	.oo
24 reliabel	-.29	-.o3	.o4	-.1o	.o1	.1o	.oo
25 untidy	.45	-.o4	.o1	-.o6	.o9	.22	.o4

the five dimensions were obtained from every student (for every grade) correlated with the evaluating teacher's mark in the last report-card. The mean correlations of every grade totalled: o.55 for talent, o.52 for effort, o.22 for discipline, o.14 for social activity, and o.o3 for fortitude. Drawing upon the results from other studies (Meyer & Butzkamm, 1975) this result might be interpreted in terms of causal attribution. Teachers attribute the performance of students mainly to talent and/or effort of these students and to a certain degree to their discipline. Meyer & Butzkamm (1975) asked 1o teachers to write down for each student those causes to which they attributed the arithmetic mark in the last report-card. The categorization of the open answers yielded the following result: 5o% of the causes fell in the category of talent, 27.6% of effort, 8.7% of other personality factors, and 8.5% of factors from the environment outside of school. It is quite likely that the relevance of the factors of implicit personality theory for the teacher lies in his opinion that these attributes advance or hamper accomplishment of his goal (which is: achievement of a high-level school performance).

Similar considerations are to be employed in the discussion of the students' interaction. From a study by Drescher (reference note) we can extract preliminary clues about the structure of student's implicit personality theory about schoolmates. The author asked students to indicate on a scale the degree in which proposed reasons contributed to their rejection of a schoolmate. A factor analysis of the causes yielded three fac-

tors: (lack of) companionship, aggressiveness, and (lack of) performance/talent. The problem in question in the present experimental investigation was approached by means of the role-simulation method. It reads: Do Ss pay fortified attention to the attributes which are part of the teacher's implicit personalty theory of students if they place themselves in the position of a teacher? And, placing themselves in the role of a student: Do they attend selectively to attributes from the domain of the student's perspective?

METHODS[+]

Subjects. As Ss served 144 university students at Teachers Colleges in Heidelberg and Karlsruhe as well as 64 elementary-school teachers during a post-graduate education specializing as a teacher for the handicapped at Teachers College in Heidelberg. Teachers and students of this profession both have an intimate relation to the role of a teacher as well as to that of a student. They are possibly able to place themselves in both roles.

The investigation took place during lecture and was announced before. With a partial sample of 64 students of the teacher profession individual examinations were carried out. About half of the Ss were given at first the instruction for the teacher's role, afterwards that for the student's role. With the others the order was reversed.

[+]Data assessment was carried out under the supervision of the author by Gudrun Exner at the Department of Psychology, University of Heidelberg

Procedure. The Ss were instructed that the investigation would be concerned with role taking and that their task was to place themselves as good as possible in the two distinct roles. The instruction reads: 'This investigation is concerned with the mechanisms operating while trying to place oneself in the role of another person ... Please place yourself at first in the role of a teacher. A new student, Karl, is entering your class. Here we have a list of attributes you might use to characterize students. Read them first and keep them in mind because you are later to characterize Karl with these attributes. For this purpose we deliver ample information about Karl originating from his previous formmaster as there are, personal data, family background, a list of his attributes, evaluation of his performance etc. in order that you as a teacher are able to form a vivid impression of Karl. You are to use the attributes of that list for your characterization of Karl. This is the list. Please consider that we are concerned with your ability to place yourself in the role of a teacher'.

After this instruction the Ss were presented a list with 16 attributes written down in succession. 8 were derived from the teacher's perspective, 8 from the student's perspective. The items were displayed 3o seconds. Then the Ss were requested to write down all the attributes presented on a sheet of paper handed out before. ('In order that none of these attributes might be forgotten please write them all down'.) Two minutes were conceded to do that. After that the instruction for the second role was read out. The instructions were identic-

al, except that the promised informations (which actually were not given) were said to be from a schoolmate knowing Karl for a long time. The whole procedure was repeated. Each group was presented the 16 attributes of the other group. Afterwards the Ss were informed about the true purpose of the study.

Selection and Presentation of the Attributes. 16 attributes which were thought to be of relevance for the role of a teacher and 16 for the student's role were selected. The 16 attributes of a teacher were drawn from the MDS structure of the implicit personality theory of teachers (Hofer, 197o). Between two to six attributes were picked from every factor of the five:

for effort:	studious, interested, unconcentrated, inattentive, tidy, undutiful
for talent:	intelligent, talented, imaginative
for discipline:	impolite, obedient
for social openmindedness:	self-confident, approachable, immodest
for fortitude:	sensitive, complex.

We have no MDS analysis of the implicit personality theory of students about students at hand. Jones & Thibaut (1958) suggest to analyse the nature of social interaction in order to draw inferences about the nature of interpersonal perception. Interaction among pupils is characterized by the pursuance of the goal 'personal goal attainment'. This goal triggers the 'value maintenance set' in the perceptive sphere. It enhances sensitiveness towards personality characteristics as understanding, candour, indulgence, helpfulness, and tolerance.

The study by Drescher (reference note) - supporting our view - is suggesting to include the two factors: 'companionship' and 'emotion'. A third factor for 'initative' was added. The research about implicit personality theory demonstrates the importance of an activity component in evaluating fellowmen.

Finally the following attributes were selected:

for emotion:	affectionate, lacking humour, romantic, sympathetic, cheerful, callous, gentle
for companionship:	yielding, companionable, dishonest, intolerant
for initiative:	aimless, courageous, tiresome, pretentious, inattractive.

Out of the total of these 32 attributes two lists each consisting of 16 attributes were constituted. While in the first role the Ss were presented the first, while in the second the other list. Each list contained 8 attributes of the teacher and 8 of the student. 32 different sequences of the attributes in the list were arranged with each attribute once at the beginning and at the end of the list.

RESULTS

The data for the students of the teacher profession, for teachers as well as for the groups and the single trials might be summarized because they didn't differ significantly.
At first the number of reproduced attributes originating in the teacher's respectively the student's view was determined for each S. Table 2 contains the mean values from both experimental conditions.

Table 2. Mean number of the reproduced attributes of students belonging to the respective view in both conditions

		instruction: role of teacher	role of student	significance
attri-	teacher's perspective	3.90	3.14	$< 0{,}01$
butes	student's perspective	2.93	3.72	$< 0{,}01$

The first hypothesis reads that more items are reproduced in each experimental condition which are related to the respective view. To test it the t-test for correlated samples was used. We compared the mean values of the differences between the attributes in the condition teacher's role and those in the condition student's role. The values of the Ss were nearly distributed normally. The differences were significant on the 1% level.

In the condition of the teacher's role significantly more attributes from the teacher's perspective were reproduced than in the condition of the student's role. This is also true for the condition of the student's role, where significantly more attributes from the student's perspective were reproduced than in the condition of the teacher's role.

A comparison of the experimental conditions with respect to the attributes we used is depicted in tables 3 and 4. The first two columns depict how often the respective attributes are reproduced in both experimental conditions. The computation of significance was carried out with 2 x 2-table-chi-square test. For every attribute the frequency of being reproduced respectively not reproduced in both conditions was determined.

These data are independent from each other because each attribute was presented to the Ss in one experimental condition only. A look on table 3 shows that 11 attributes from the teacher's perspective are reproduced more often while placing oneself in the teacher's role than while placing oneself in the student's role.

With 9 attributes these differences are at least significant at the 5% level (one-sided testing). The largest differences are to be found with the attributes interested, tidy, inattentive, studious, talented, and polite. With one attribute (sensitive) a significant difference refuting the hypothesis (being negatively correlated) is observed.

In Table 4 the results for the attributes from the student's perspective are summarized. There the differences are only three times in opposition to our expectation (that is: are negatively correlated). Altogether the results are nevertheless less convincing than those from the teacher's perspective. Only 5 attributes are found to be correlated significantly in the expected trend. The relations (phi-correlations) between independent variable (role) and dependent variable (reproduction) are altogether poorer.

Summarizing the attributes of one dimension you obtain the results as depicted in figure 1. It is describing the mean frequency of the reproduction of an attribute belonging to one dimension in both experimental conditions. The total numbers of the reproductions are to be neglected. They are dependent on uncontrolled factors as there are the frequency of occurence

Table 3. Frequencies of the attributes reproduced from the teacher's perspective in both experimental conditions, chi-square values (2x2-table test), Phi-correlations between role and reproduction as well as the level of significance (N = 208)

attributes	role of teacher	role of student	χ^2	Phi-correlations	level of significance (onesided)
studious	86	60	15.5	0.27	ss
interested	80	42	28.63	0.37	ss
unconcentrated	33	15	8.78	0.21	ss
inattentive	58	25	21.83	0.32	ss
tidy	48	36	28.77	0.37	ss
undutiful	32	20	3.69	0.13	s
intelligent	88	79	2.46	0.11	ns
talented	64	36	15.10	0.26	ss
imaginative	23	28	0.65	-0.06	ns
impolite	52	26	13.87	0.26	ss
obedient	77	61	5.51	0.16	s
self-confident	25	31	0.88	-0.07	ns
approachable	30	30	0	0	ns
immodest	24	20	0.34	0.04	ns
sensitive	61	67	3.27	-0.13	s
complex	31	33	0.12	-0.02	ns

Table 4. Frequencies of the attributes reproduced from the student's perspective in both experimental conditions, chi-square values (2x2-table test), Phi-correlations between role and reproduction as well as the level of significance (N = 208)

attributes	role of teacher	role of student	χ^2	Phi-correlations	level of significance (onesided)
affectionate	60	65	0.45	0.05	ns
lacking humour	33	52	6.35	0.17	ss
romantic	39	62	8.71	0.20	ss
sympathetic	16	21	0.82	0.06	ns
cheerful	43	58	3.70	0.13	s
callous	21	25	0.45	0.05	ns
gentle	47	63	4.94	0.15	s
yielding	27	25	0.10	-0.02	ns
companionable	65	91	17.3	0.29	ss
dishonest	41	43	0.07	0.02	ns
intolerant	67	65	0.08	-0.02	ns
aimless	45	45	0	0	ns
courageous	52	60	1.06	0.07	ns
tiresome	27	27	0	0	ns
pretentious	32	24	1.56	-0.09	ns
inattractive	38	47	1.43	0.08	ns

ns = not significant
s = significant at the 5%-level
ss = significant at the 1%-level

in regular language usage, the word size, or the visual discriminability of a word.

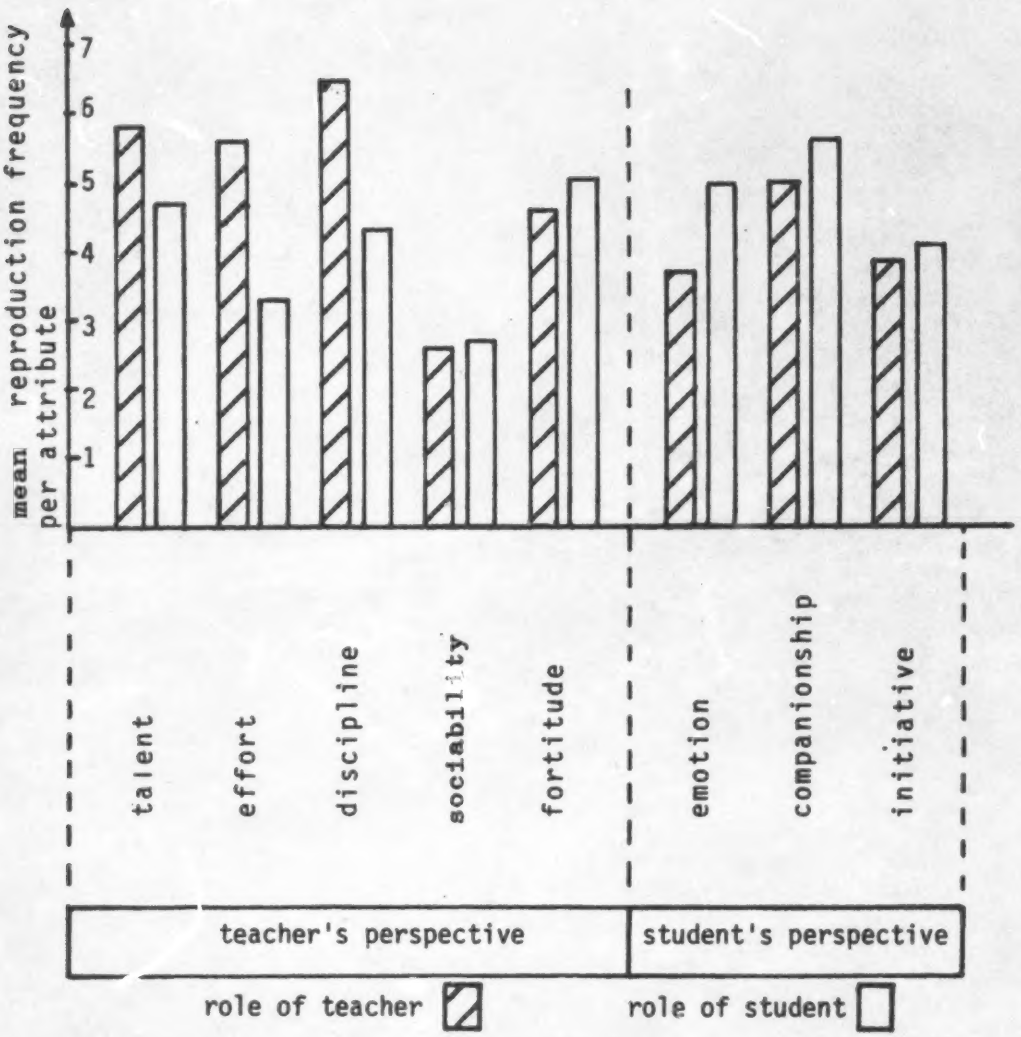

fig. 1. Mean reproduction frequency per attribute in both experimental conditions.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study quite convincingly endorse our hypothesis that the role relationship a person is in influences the selection of attributes respectively conducts of fellowmen he is directing his attention to.
This is especially evident for attributes from the teacher's view. In this role the Ss attend above all to attributes of a new student signalling his willingness for co-operation. There the differences to the student's role are largest and most distinct. In the student's role these attributes are comparatively less attended to. In addition the teacher directs his perception much stronger than schoolmates do to attributes indicating discipline. This is in accordance with the results from the study by Glass (1967) where teachers first of all were concerned with disruptive behaviours of students at school. Within the domain of talent the differences are found to be insignificant. It is true that in the teacher's role the attribute 'talented' is reproduced more often than in the student's role. It is not possible, however, to substantiate the difference for the attribute 'intelligent' while 'imaginative' is even more often (insignificantly) reproduced in the student's role. This result is presumably not to be attributed to a low interest of the teacher in intelligence but instead to the fact that students also judge their schoolmates with respect to intelligence and performance aspects. This is demonstrated in a study by Höhn (1967) which deals with the poor student. The study by Drescher (reference note) also yields a factor which

consists of performance aspects which are containing the reasons for the rejection of a schoolmate by students (because he has a speech defect, because he is performing inefficiently at school, because he is stupid). Both students and teachers attend in the same ways to attributes originating in the domains of 'sociability' and 'fortitude'. For this reason these aspects are presumably irrelevant for teachers because they cannot be employed in the explanation of performance at school (Hofer 1975). On the other hand it may quite well be that students are interested to a certain extent in those dimensions because their interactions with schoolmates are influenced by them. Perhaps with these factors the views of the two roles are overlapping each other. In the role of a student attributes from the dimension 'emotion' are reproduced more often than in the teacher's role, especially the attributes 'romantic', 'lacking humour', and 'gentle'. These attributes are important for students, that is, hamper respectively promote their interactional goal if they seek to maximize positive social relations to schoolmates. According to the results of Drescher (reference note) the view of the student's role should emphasize especially those attributes indicating cooperative spirit. Following Jones & Thibaut (1958, p. 163) we also would expect this if students seek in an interaction consequences external to this interaction. For them attributes of their schoolmates as compliance and permissiveness should matter. However, only 'companionship' is showing a significant relationship. Perhaps we have here a case of overlapping per-

spectives. For already in a study by Kaplan (1952) behaviors of students as unsocial conduct, and egoism were among the most frequently unpleasant respectively disturbing events mentioned by teachers. They presumably hamper the attainment of their goal of promoting the child's whole personality. With regard to the negligible differences between the attributes on the dimension 'initiative' it might be possible that we are concerned with a dimension of judgment possessing the same (low) significance for both roles.

Besides the interpretation that overlapping perspectives are responsible for these slight differences there also exists the possibility of a transformation in meaning. The Ss assign different meanings to the same attributes while occupying the different roles. Thus the teacher is expecting from an 'imaginative' student for example actions which are productive and related to the lessons. On the other hand a student might imagine a buddy inclined to miscellaneous jokes and adventures.

The hypothesis of the present experimental investigation might be considered as confirmed. Ss attend selectively to attributes of their partners which they activate by the respective implicit personality theory. Perception is measured in terms of memory performances. Empirical criterions concerned with perceptual performances always include to a lesser or larger degree memory influences. The longer the interval between the perceptual process and the measurement procedure the more memory effects come into play and the more easier set effects can be identified (Haber 1966).

At least in the case of the teacher's perspective our approach stating that the implicit personality theory of teachers exercises a mediating function between the goals of the teacher and his perception of the student's attributes is consolidated.

To explain the selectivity of perception during interaction at school we can refer to a filter model. Broadbent (1971) postulated a selective mechanism of perceptual preparedness (Pidgeon-holing) functioning with regard to categories of content. The person tries to discern in a variety of stimuli all those stimuli related to a certain category. According to Treisman a mechanism of analysis subjects all incoming information to a series of successive tests: 'The decision at each test point could be thought of as a signal detection problem ... a certain adjustable cut-off or criterion point is adopted on the dimension being discriminated,above which signals are accepted and below which they are rejected as 'noise'' (Neisser, p. 211).

While in the situation of selective listening the thresholds for some cognitive categories are lowered. You would suppose that the role you are occupying is responsible for a lowering of the irritation threshold of those items which are activated by the respective implicit personality theory. In case several stimuli impinge upon an individual at the same time the role specific lowering of the threshold for entire categories of stimuli is causing their selective perception. In the present experiment the stimuli were admittedly not presented simultaneously but successively. Despite this the capacity of the Ss did not suffice to solve the taks. Haber (1966) attributes the

improved perceptual performance with objects you are set on to the possibility that they are encoded prior to others. Set on perception is operating by influencing the sequence of encoding. According to Neisser (1974) the selected stimuli are processed through the process of analysis by synthesis and recalled by reconstruction. However, the consequence is not an exlusive processing of selected stimuli. According to Kahneman (1973) it is also possible to process simultaneously sensory inputs (parallel or sequentual). 'It is easy to ignore an irrelevant object but extremely difficult to ignore irrelevant attributes of an object attended to' (Kahneman, 1973, p. 111). Teachers and schoolmates do admittedly attend selectively to student's attributes which are of relevance for them. But they are also able to make statements about other attributes to the degree in which the specimen student is of importance to them.

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